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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of a doctoral program specializing in community college leadership. When Morgan State University (Maryland) expanded its existing Urban Educational Leadership Doctoral Program to include a concentration in Urban Community College Leadership, it became the first historically black university in the United States to provide such a program. To address the unique needs of the working professional, the program coordinator designed the Cohort Leadership Learning Model, which offers students a stimulating, highly structured, year-round program of study. Students will graduate from the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program with a unique capacity to understand urban life and phenomena in the context of the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of this nation's urban and metropolitan comprehensive community colleges. The Cohort Leadership Learning Model is based on the belief that leadership of an urban community college requires a specific knowledge base emphasizing the following: the urban environment; the organizational culture and structure of learning-centered institutions; and the unique cultural and cognitive characteristics of urban learners. The annual Leadership Institute prepares the student to function effectively in the cohort and provides direction for completing the requirements of the program of study. (JA)

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Transforming Community College Leadership Preparation: A Cohort Leadership Learning Model

Christine Johnson McPhail

When Morgan State University expanded its existing Urban Educational Leadership Doctoral Program to include a Concentration in Urban Community College Leadership, it became the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the United States to take on the task of providing a Doctoral Program specializing in Community College Leadership.

The Transformation: Developing a New Vision

In the fall of 1998, Morgan State University invited a former community college president to develop the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program. By the close of the Fall 1998 Term, the proposed program was complete and a group of national community college leaders were invited to the University to review the proposed program. Offered as a program of study within Morgan State University's existing Urban Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, the new urban community college leadership concentration had to provide a common core program of study while distinguishing itself with a strong community college curriculum. After completing their review, the national community college leaders endorsed the program and commended Morgan State University for taking the initiative to create an innovative urban community college leadership doctoral program designed to meet the unique needs of community college professionals in the urban context.

To confirm interest in the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program, a pilot course, *The Urban Community College*, was offered in the Spring 1999 semester. Concern over whether there was a market for a specialization in Urban Community College Leadership soon dissipated as the pilot course exceeded the University's expectation. All of the participants in the pilot course immediately filed formal application for admission to the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program, and the program was officially launched in the Fall 1999 term. In addition, local and regional community college educators became increasingly aware of the new program and the huge demand for admission was testimony to the need for a community college leadership program in the region. Morgan State University

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admitted its first Cohort (20) of Urban Community College Leadership doctoral students in the Fall of 1999.

The Foundation and Beliefs: Meeting the Challenge

Today, many college professionals are looking for opportunities to pursue advanced degrees without interrupting their current jobs. The challenge faced by Morgan State University was to design a community college leadership program that emphasized academic integrity, high quality instruction, innovative curriculum and a delivery system compatible with the competing needs and interests of working professionals. To be effective, the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program was designed to prepare leaders who can articulate and execute the vision necessary to lead 21st century institutions. These professionals enter the program with a variety of backgrounds and skills, but the connecting link is the desire to attain a degree relevant to their profession. To address the unique needs of the working professional, the program coordinator built the new doctoral program on learning principles defined by O'Banion (1997) and Barr and Tagg (1995). She designed the Cohort Leadership Learning Model, a doctoral program that offers students a stimulating, highly structured, year-round program of study. This program of study prepares working professionals to apply leading-edge leadership practices, technology, and action research to improve leadership of the nation's urban community colleges. Given Morgan State University's designation as Maryland's public urban university, the Urban Community College Leadership Program places a major focus on the social, economic, and political characteristics of the urban environment. Students will emerge from the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program with a unique capacity to understand urban life and phenomena in the context of the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of this nation's urban and metropolitan comprehensive community colleges.

The Cohort Leadership Learning Model is based on the belief that leadership of an urban or metropolitan community college requires a specific knowledge base emphasizing the following:

- The urban environment
- The organizational culture and structure of learning-centered institutions
- The unique cultural and cognitive characteristics of urban learners

This knowledge base serves as the major underlying dynamic for the components of the Cohort Leadership Learning Model:

- Leadership in an urban community college setting requires a unique set of skills that can be developed through "focused" learning
- Leaders must possess a working knowledge and understand the changing environment of institutions they serve (economic, political, social, technological, etc.)
- Urban community college leaders must understand how to use personal and professional training to advance the institutions they serve
- Leaders must possess the interpersonal communication skills to establish internal and external partnerships
- Leaders must understand, facilitate, and monitor multiple leadership agendas: teaching and learning, fiscal management, research, innovation, governance, change, technology, and politics

Finally, Morgan State University is committed to providing a doctoral program where working professionals will grow, change, and add value to their present competencies through incremental steps within a coherent curriculum that offers rich and meaningful learning experiences.

The Cohort Leadership Learning Model

The Cohort and Collaborative Learning Experience: Preparing Leaders to Lead

We realize that leaders lead other people and that leaders must possess the ability to communicate and demonstrate a high interpersonal skill quotient. To establish a common ground, Morgan State University requires all students to enter the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program as a member of a Cohort Group.

A Cohort Group is a close-knit body of individuals united in a common cause—the pursuit of the doctoral degree. Members of the Cohort commit to this collaborative experience throughout their entire program study. Cohort members work together to find solutions to contemporary problems .The course work is enhanced by focusing on issues related to community college education. While a member of the Cohort, students still take personal responsibility for their education. The Cohort experience is similar to the work experience in the real world, where the college expects leaders to be able to form and lead a variety of constituent groups. Throughout

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the program of study, the Cohort Leadership Learning Model provides a variety of learning and leadership training formats: project teams, in-class and field collaborative work, whole group instruction, peer coaching, mentoring, and individual work.

The Annual Leadership Institute: Learning to Succeed

The Leadership Institute prepares the student to function effectively in the Cohort and provides direction for completing the requirements of the program of study. In addition, faculty members and visiting scholars share information on research initiatives, contemporary issues, and general aspects of leadership in community colleges. The Institute is usually a two-day session held in the fall and prior to launching the program of study for the year. Through participation in the Leadership Institute, Cohort members synthesize the requirements of the program of study, get acquainted with each other, and discover how their interconnectedness forms the basis of the Cohort experience. Under the leadership of the program coordinator, students plan, coordinate and conduct the Annual Leadership Institute.

The Curriculum: Combining Theory and Practice

The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of community college leaders. Today's community colleges are looking for leaders who can deal with the complexities of creating and leading. The coordinator reviewed other community college leadership preparation programs and discovered that many of the existing programs have not updated their offerings to meet the needs of contemporary urban community colleges. She designed the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program to more effectively meet the needs of urban community college leaders. In addition to common higher education courses, this curriculum combines theory with practice and emphasizes the learning revolution, qualitative and quantitative research methods, technology, governing boards and trusteeship, problem solving strategies, planning and budgeting, and development of interpersonal communication skills. Through relevant curriculum including an internship, members of the Cohort pursue a program of study focusing on real urban

community college issues and problems and, with their Cohort members, exercise problem solving skills to create innovative "out-of-the box" solutions.

The Instructional Delivery System: Implementing Learning-Centered Principles

The instructional delivery system is designed for the convenience of in-service community college faculty, staff and administrators. The program is based on key principles of the Learning College:

- The program engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices
- The program assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities
- The program creates substantive change in individual learners

The program, further, breaks the bonds of the inherited architecture of graduate education by offering an instructional delivery system that is neither time-bound, place-bound, or role-bound. All courses are offered on weekends (Fridays, 6:00PM-9:00PM, and Saturdays, 9:00AM-4:00PM) for a period of five-weeks. The student is able to complete the doctoral progam in three years. Courses are taught at the University as well as on-site at many of the area's community college campuses. The Leadership Learning Model requires active learners and learning environments that are cooperative, collaborative, and supportive. Knowledge is constructed by learners in the program through reading, writing, oral presentations, individual and group problem solving, and small group projects. The doctoral program recognizes that learners bring a wealth of knowledge shaped by individual experiences to the learning situation. Through a continual process of transformation, learners challenge and build upon this knowledge base as they progress through required coursework and field experiences.

The Professional Development Seminar: Connecting for Success

The Professional Development Seminar is a course designed to be the "connecting and sustaining link" of the Cohort. It is taught each year and embodies the core idea behind the Cohort model: providing learners with a support base for completing their course work and dissertation.

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The objective of the course is to provide the necessary support for the student to achieve his/her goals. The Professional Development Seminar focuses on the whole student by assisting students with clarification of long-term career goals and enhancement of interpersonal skills, and serves as guided supervision for completion of the dissertation. Other aspects of the professional development experience include job shadowing, participating in professional conferences, developing curriculum vitae and portfolios based on team projects, and assessing future career aspirations. We believe that this course will assist in offsetting the number of doctoral students who complete all required course work and never complete their dissertations.

The Research Journal: Writing While Learning

The research journal was established to address the need to encourage community college leaders to write and contibute to the literature in our field. Students enrolled in the Urban Community College Leadership Doctoral Program are presented with the opportunity to strengthen research skills while engaged in coursework. They are encouraged to publish research articles and opinion pieces as they pursue regular coursework. A research journal, tentatively titled Journal of Research and Practice in Urban Community College Education, has been established to encourage students to publish and to add a unique voice to the community college literature.

The Classroom:Establishing Partnerships

The classroom for the Cohort Leadership Learning Model has no boundaries. The State of Maryland has 16 community colleges. These institutions serve as laboratories for our classes and many of our classes are actually offered on-site at local community colleges. These institutions are eager to provide meaningful opportunities for our students to experience first hand knowledge of community college trends, issues, and concerns. Leaders at the institutions serve as visiting scholars, providing high quality instruction; they serve as mentors, supervisors for interns, subjects for job shadowing experiences, and dissertation committeee members. Central to the program of study is access to the various professional associations such as AACC, AACT,and

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AERA. These professional associations help to connect our program to the pulse of what is happening in community college education. Cohort members are encouraged to attend national conferences and to become involved in these professional organizations.

The Future: Creating and Leading Change

The Cohort Leadership Learning Model is a leadership preparation experience that engages students in the real world of leadership roles in urban and metropolitan community colleges in preparation for leading 21st century learning – centered institutions Throughout the program, students are exposed to authenic learning experiences and professional development is integrated into the curriculum. Faculty and visiting scholars work together to mentor Cohort members toward successful completion of program requirements as well as helping them set and accomplish realistic career objectives. Morgan State University is committed to providing a learning experience where in-service community college educators can assess and develop the skills that will prepare them to lead the 21st century learning –centered community college.

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